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## Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE)

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A "Despised" "Semi-Profession": Perceptions of Curricular Content Relating to Gender and Social Issues among 1993 MLIS/MLS Graduates

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# A "Despised" "Semi-Profession"

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## Perceptions of Curricular Content Relating to Gender and Social Issues Among 1993 MLIS/MLS Graduates

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James V. Carmichael, Jr., and Marilyn L. Shontz

In the spring of 1994, the authors surveyed 793 male and female 1993 masters of library and information studies graduates, U.S. and Canadian, concerning social responsibilities and gender issues, and the treatment that these subjects received in their master's-degree programs. Extensive personal data were also solicited, including the respondents' self-identified political orientation, sexual orientation, marital status, educational background, and job history. The response rate was 58 percent. Quantitative data and voluminous open-ended comments received suggest that librarians and library education are less progressive than commonly depicted in the professional press; that some programs do not even discuss women's issues in their courses; and that socially nonreactionary female graduates are eager to learn more about these and related issues, not only because it will benefit them personally, but also because the majority of library clients are female.

Historically, women in the traditionally "feminized" professions of nursing, teaching, social work, and librarianship have experienced displacement by males in terms of prestige, status, and pay.<sup>1</sup> At different periods, women have constituted approximately 70 to 98 percent of the work force in these professions, yet research consistently indicates that vertical stratification, task segregation, and lower pay and prestige accrue to women in these fields. Moreover, the professions associated with women are stigmatized by a negative feminine stereotype, by which the problems of low occupational status and prestige are attributed to the presence of large numbers of female professionals. It should be noted that the

accredited master's degree has been the accepted professional credential since 1948, and library and information studies are therefore conducted almost exclusively at the graduate level.

Since 1970, the American Library Association (ALA) has adopted several initiatives meant to combat sexism in the profession. During the Equal Rights Amendment initiative, for example, ALA ceased meeting in cities or states which did not endorse amendment ratification. Also, the Committee on the Status of Women has regularly monitored publications, image concerns, pay, and status levels among librarians. Most importantly, ALA has sponsored numerous studies and publications in-

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tended to educate membership, including employers, about gender equity. In spite of these enterprises, statistics continue to indicate that female librarians earn less, hold fewer administrative positions, and experience more sexism in library school, at conferences, and in the workplace than do their male counterparts. Why has sexism in a profession numerically dominated by women persisted? At least one theory would hold that female and/or male recruits to the profession are not receiving equal and adequate information about gender issues in the workplace in their professional programs.

To test this thesis, in spring 1994 the authors surveyed 793 male and female masters of library and information studies (MLIS) graduates, U.S. and Canadian, concerning social responsibilities and gender issues. In an attempt to survey the most recent graduates and to reduce problems of under-sampling as a result of noncurrent addresses, the population chosen for this study was all 1993 calendar-year master's-degree graduates of library and information studies programs accredited by the American Library Association's Committee on Accreditation (COA). A stratified proportional sample of 20 percent of the graduates of each program was randomly selected from all programs which are currently accepting new students. Using the 1993 statistics of the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE) [57, pp. 120-26] as an approximation of the gender ratio of MLIS/MLS graduates, the

final sample was to consist of approximately 206 men and 784 women.

Questionnaires (see appendix) were mailed directly from those programs whose interpretation of campus, state, and province privacy laws prohibited them from supplying the names of graduates to the researchers. Fifteen programs chose not to participate, which resulted in underrepresentation of western programs in particular. Schools that chose to distribute questionnaires were given explicit instructions on the selection of graduates; each school was assigned an alphabetic letter with which to begin selection of 20 percent of 1993 graduates. Where researchers were provided lists of names by the programs, questionnaires were mailed out using the last known address. The total number of questionnaires mailed out to graduates of the forty-two MLIS/MLS programs which participated was 793.

Of 793 questionnaires mailed out, 465 usable responses were received (58.64 percent). Thirty-seven questionnaires were returned because the addressee had moved with no forwarding address, and 291 persons did not return questionnaires at all. Only those questionnaires accompanied by completed personal data sheets were considered usable, as one of the study's aims was to relate personal factors with expressed attitudes in response to statements on the questionnaire.

Specifically, graduates were asked to agree or disagree with thirty-one statements reflecting attitudes toward

women's issues, social responsibilities "mandates" (e.g., political correctness), and gay and lesbian issues, and also to assess the treatment that these subjects received in their master's-degree programs. Extensive personal data were also solicited, including the respondents' self-identified social orientation, sexual orientation, marital status, educational background, and job history. Responses were received from 502 graduates (63.3 percent of the sample); usable responses numbered 465 (58.6 percent). Frequencies, percentages, and means were calculated for items. Differences between means using analysis of variance (ANOVA) were examined using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) at the probability level  $p \leq .05$ . The demographic factors used for comparison were sex, sexual orientation, and social orientation. The present report covers comparisons by sex.<sup>2</sup>

### Demographic Profile

Demographic data confirm the historical profile of library and information studies professionals. The resulting sample gender ratio (76.3 percent female, 23.4 percent male) approximates that reported by the MLIS programs in their annual reports to the Association for Library and Information Science Education (77.3 percent female, 22.7 percent male). The largest portion of the sample (31.6 percent) was between twenty-one and twenty-nine years of age, and the majority of graduates, both male and female, were born after 1954, and were therefore either unborn or children when the social revolution of the 1960s flowered. The majority of males (84.4 percent) and females (89.1 percent) were white, with proportionately more male than female representation in minority groups (see table 1). There were only slight differences

between the proportions of males (50.9 percent) and females (52.2 percent) who chose to describe their social orientation as "liberal" or "radical liberal," or between the parallel conservative categories (13.9 percent male, 10.3 percent female). As for sexual orientation, a slightly greater proportion of males (13.9 percent) than females (8.1 percent) indicated lesbian (i.e., either gay, lesbian, or bisexual) status.

### Employment and Educational Profile

Over a fourth (26.2 percent) of graduates were engaged in some form of library reference work, with an additional 2.2 percent employed in other public service work such as interlibrary loan. Of the remaining position functions, only 6.7 percent were in cataloging, with an additional 1.9 percent in other kinds of technical services work; 1.1 percent were engaged in acquisitions work; and 0.9 percent were employed as collection managers. Other respondents (20.8 percent) defined their positions by clientele served (10.1 percent SLM specialist, 5.8 percent youth services, 4.9 percent adult services). Over 10 percent of graduates (10.1 percent) were engaged in specialized work that cannot be classified easily by function, such as systems work, state library liaison work, or combined assignments, while 4.1 percent were employed in some administrative capacity such as department head, unit supervisor, or library director. Twenty-six percent failed to indicate any kind of position function.

More men (9 percent) than women (4.5 percent) were engaged in some kind of administrative work, though these individuals account for only 4.1 percent of the total sample. While no disparities by sex were found in the proportions of men and women working in technical

**Table 1**  
Demographic Profile of 1993 LIS Graduates By Sex:  
Personal and Employment Data  
*N* = 464 (%)

Characteristic <sup>1</sup>	Males		Females		Characteristic	Males		Females	
	<i>n</i> 1 = 109		<i>n</i> 2 = 355			<i>n</i> 1 = 109		<i>n</i> 2 = 355	
<b>Age</b>					<b>Knew AIDS Victim</b>				
21-29	35	(32.4)	112	(31.5)	Yes	40	(37.4)	125	(35.5)
30-35	21	(19.4)	74	(20.9)	No	67	(62.6)	227	(64.5)
36-39	15	(13.9)	35	(9.9)	<b>Library Type</b>				
40-45	25	(23.1)	70	(19.8)	Academic	27	(25.2)	76	(21.7)
46-49	8	(7.4)	35	(9.9)	Public	35	(32.7)	92	(26.3)
50-55	3	(2.8)	24	(6.8)	SLM	4	(3.7)	47	(13.4)
56 or older	1	(0.9)	4	(1.1)	Special	11	(10.3)	45	(12.9)
<b>Marital Status</b>					Non-LIS	10	(9.3)	40	(11.3)
Single	45	(41.3)	164	(46.3)	None	15	(14.0)	31	(8.9)
Married	58	(53.2)	165	(46.5)	Other	5	(4.7)	19	(5.4)
With partner	6	(5.5)	25	(7.0)	<b>Position</b>				
<b>Race</b>					Administration	7	(9.0)	12	(4.5)
White	92	(84.4)	312	(89.1)	Adult services	6	(7.7)	17	(6.4)
Hispanic	3	(2.8)	11	(3.1)	Youth services	1	(1.3)	26	(9.8)
Afr/Am	4	(3.7)	10	(2.9)	Reference	36	(46.2)	86	(32.5)
Asi/Am	4	(3.7)	6	(1.7)	Other public	5	(6.4)	5	(1.9)
Nat/Am	4	(3.7)	4	(1.1)	Cataloging	7	(9.0)	24	(9.1)
Other	2	(1.8)	7	(2.0)	Acquisitions	1	(1.3)	4	(1.5)
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>					Other tech.	2	(2.6)	7	(2.6)
Straight	93	(86.1)	334	(94.1)	Collection dev.	1	(1.3)	3	(1.1)
Gay/Lesbian	10	(9.3)	12	(3.4)	SLM specialist	4	(5.1)	42	(15.8)
Bisexual	5	(4.6)	6	(1.7)	Other	8	(10.3)	39	(14.7)
<b>Social Orientation</b>									
Radical lib.	12	(11.1)	17	(4.8)					
Liberal	43	(39.8)	170	(48.4)					
Moderate	38	(35.2)	127	(36.2)					
Conservative	15	(13.9)	36	(10.3)					
Rad. conserv.	—		1	(0.3)					

<sup>1</sup> Response to each item varied; percentages are based on number of responses to each characteristic.

services, a greater proportion of men (46.2 percent) than women (32.5 percent) selected reference work. Perhaps, inevitably, more women (25.6 percent) than men (6.4 percent) are school media specialists or youth services librarians. Possible reasons for these occupational choices have been offered elsewhere.<sup>3</sup>

The disciplinary backgrounds of this sample, as indicated by undergraduate, second master's, and doctoral degrees, confirmed previous findings about the educational background of MLIS students (see table 2). Only eleven individuals had obtained a doctorate, while twenty-eight subjects had earned other degrees (associate degree or law degree, for example). The majority of graduates obtained their undergraduate degrees in the humanities or social sciences, according to the government classification of these instructional areas;<sup>4</sup> the largest groups represented were letters (21.6 percent), social science (20.9 percent), education (13.9 percent), performing arts (9.3 percent), communications, and psychology (4.6 percent each).

It is interesting to note those fields in which only women majored (area ethnic studies, allied health, health science, home economics, and parks recreation), and those in which only men obtained undergraduate degrees (agriculture, architecture). More men (31.4 percent) than women (17.4 percent) earned undergraduate degrees in the social sciences, though the difference in the proportion of men and women who earn degrees in letters (18.1 and 22.7 percent, respectively) was negligible. There was only a slight difference in the proportion of male and female education majors (10.5 versus 14.7 percent), although at the master's level, only 23.5 percent of males earned an education degree as compared to 39.7 percent of females.

For those earning a master's degree,

the fields of education, social science, performing arts, and letters accounted for the greatest number of degrees, and for those earning a second master's degree, only marketing and philosophy/religion were new to the list. Males held exclusive claim to master's degrees in divinity; likewise only females earned master's degrees in interdisciplinary studies (which includes women's studies). While no general conclusions can be made based on the small numbers obtained, it is worth noting other fields in which females rather than males obtained master's degrees (health sciences, home economics, law, and archival science) and those in which only males chose to specialize (area ethnic studies, business management, communications, and computer and information science).

### **Social Responsibilities, Professionalism, and "Political Correctness"**

Seven questionnaire items tested attitudes about professionalism as it relates to social responsibilities, personal awareness of social issues, social activism as an exercise of First Amendment rights, and library collections as a mirror of society. Four items addressed "diversity"/special interest attitudes and attitudes toward "political correctness" (see table 3).

Only a minority of graduates strongly agreed or agreed that professionals should remain aloof from social issues (12 percent), while nearly two-thirds (64.6 percent) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Slightly over a fifth (22.3 percent) agreed that library and information professionals had adequately addressed social issues, while 41.1 percent both agreed and disagreed, implying perhaps that the profession had addressed certain issues adequately, and others, less so. There were

**Table 2**  
Educational Background of 1993 LIS Graduates By Sex Expressed in %  
N = 464

	Male	Female	Total		Male	Female	Total
<b>Education Level</b>	<b>n1 = 41</b>	<b>n2 = 87</b>	<b>n3 = 128</b>	<b>Major Master's Area</b>	<b>n7 = 34</b>	<b>n8 = 58</b>	<b>n9 = 92</b>
Master's degree	31.2	16.3	19.8	Area ethnic studies	2.9	—	1.1
Second Master's	1.8	1.4	1.5	Business mgmt.	5.9	—	2.2
Doctorate	3.7	2.0	2.4	Communications	2.9	—	1.1
Other degree <sup>1</sup>	10.1	4.8	6.0	Computer inf. sci.	2.9	—	1.1
<b>Undergraduate Major Area</b>	<b>n4 = 105</b>	<b>n5 = 348</b>	<b>n6 = 453</b>	Education	23.5	39.7	33.7
Agriculture	1.0	—	0.2	Foreign languages	2.9	6.9	5.4
Architecture	1.0	—	0.2	Health sciences	—	1.7	1.1
Area ethnic studies	—	2.3	1.8	Home economics	—	1.7	1.1
Business mgmt.	1.9	2.3	2.2	Interdisciplinary	—	5.2	3.3
Communications	5.7	4.3	4.6	Law	—	1.7	1.1
Computer inf. sci.	—	0.6	0.4	Letters	8.8	10.3	9.8
Education	10.5	14.7	13.9	Liberal studies	2.9	1.7	2.2
Engineering	1.0	0.9	0.9	Lib. archival sci.	—	1.7	1.1
Foreign languages	2.9	4.3	4.0	Life science	2.9	5.2	4.3
Allied health	—	0.3	0.2	Natural resources	2.9	1.7	2.2
Health science	—	0.9	0.7	Philosophy/religion	11.8	—	4.3
Home economics	—	1.7	1.3	Social science	11.8	13.8	13.0
Letters	18.1	22.7	21.6	Performing arts	17.6	1.4	12.0
Liberal studies	1.0	1.7	1.5	<b>Second Master's Area</b>	<b>n10 = 2</b>	<b>n11 = 5</b>	<b>n12 = 7</b>
Lib. archival sci.	1.0	2.3	2.0	Marketing	—	20.0	14.3
Life sciences	4.8	3.7	4.0	Education	50.0	40.0	42.9
Mathematics	1.0	1.1	1.1	Philosophy/religion	50.0	20.0	28.6
Parks recreation	—	0.3	0.2	Social science	—	20.0	14.3
Philosophy/religion	1.9	2.0	2.0	<b>Doctorate Major Area</b>	<b>n13 = 4</b>	<b>n14 = 7</b>	<b>n15 = 11</b>
Physical science	4.8	0.6	1.5	Education	50.0	14.3	27.3
Psychology	1.0	5.7	4.6	Law	25.0	28.6	27.3
Public affairs	1.0	0.6	0.7	Lib. archival science	—	14.3	9.1
Social science	31.4	17.8	20.9	Social science	—	28.6	18.2
Performing arts	10.5	9.2	9.5	Performing arts	25.0	14.3	18.2

<sup>1</sup> Not specified in this report.

no statistically significant differences in responses to these items by sex. Not quite half of the respondents unequivocally agreed that the library profession is more progressive than other professions, with no statistically significant differences in responses by sex, while over 61 percent selected "strongly agree" or "agree" to describe their attitudes toward the statement that libraries and librarians have a responsibility to address social issues, again with no significant differences by sex. Over half of both males and females agreed with a statement which championed as inclusive a collection as possible.

The terms "multiculturalism" and "political correctness," which have received a great deal of media attention in the past decade, especially in the pages of academe's *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, drew a mixed reaction from the respondents. Over half (52.5 percent) agreed that "political correctness" was a danger to freedom of speech. Only 22.6 percent agreed that a philosophy of "political correctness" was essential for the protection of minority rights, and only 22.4 percent unequivocally agreed that the dangers of a philosophy of "political correctness" were exaggerated by the media. It is clear that the acronym "p.c." signified a degree of censorship to some 1993 graduates. While there are no significant differences by sex in responses received to social responsibilities items generally, more men than women agreed that "political correctness" was a danger to freedom of speech ( $p = .0048$ ), perhaps because men's issues have not been addressed by the profession, and because more men associate "p.c." at least in part with women's issues.

Not quite half (48.8 percent) of respondents disclaimed the statement that there are "too many" minority groups and interest groups competing for attention in society. It is evident

from these responses that 1993 graduates, on the whole, were sensitive to the struggles and claims of various minority groups. On the other hand, sixteen qualitative comments which accompanied these items echoed sentiments voiced in editorial columns of *American Libraries* over the past several years to the effect that professionalism should exist apart from social issues,<sup>5</sup> and that it is the duty of librarians to build collections representative of all points of view rather than to address particular social issues directly. These comments seemed to call for a more limited, passive, and neutral social stance, purely nonjudgmental rather than proactive.

### **Women's Issues and Legal Redress**

Five items reflected attitudes toward women's issues in the profession and in society. Three of the items related to Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action (EO/AA) legislation which applies to racial and ethnic minorities as well as women, while the other two items covered treatment of women's issues in library literature and the response of the profession to women's issues generally. Only 9.1 percent of the subjects agreed or strongly agreed that EO/AA legislation has had a negative effect on the profession, although only 31.8 percent agreed or strongly agreed that it has had a positive effect on the profession. Interestingly, only 11.9 percent agreed or strongly agreed that EO/AA has had no discernible effect on the profession, while the remaining 41.2 percent had ambiguous feelings reflected by their choice of the "neither agree nor disagree" category.

A minority (6.5 percent) of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that women's issues had received too much attention in li-



brary literature, yet only 27.3 percent agreed that the library profession has not adequately addressed women's issues. It may well be that some graduates perceived a gap between library literature and library practice, or that they may not yet be personally aware of work situations that are inequitable for women.

As might be expected, there were statistically significant differences in the way in which women and men approach items relating to women's issues in society and the profession. Men were more likely to agree that EO/AA legislation has had a negative effect on the profession ( $p = .0031$ ) and more likely to disagree that it has had a positive effect ( $p = .0007$ ). Women were more likely to agree that women's issues have not been adequately addressed by the profession ( $p = .0174$ ), and less likely to believe that they had received too much attention in library literature ( $p = .0000$ ).

### **Lesbigay Issues in the Profession**

Six items called for responses to statements reflecting attitudes about lesbians in the profession. Four of these related to lesbigay library materials, and library policies regarding lesbigay materials. Two other items related to the perception of the number of lesbians in the profession, and the personal feelings of respondents toward lesbigay issues and literature.

Less than a fifth of respondents (18.5 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that there was a higher percentage of lesbians in the profession than in society at large, and 40.8 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. This reflected some knowledge on the part of respondents, since to date there is no empirical evidence which would support the notion that there is a

larger proportion of lesbians in the library profession than in other professions, or than in the general population. Men were more likely than women to concede that there are more lesbians in the profession than in society at large ( $p = .0151$ ), a result, perhaps, of male sensitivity to the gay stereotype. Women were more likely than men to believe that lesbigay issues should be addressed through comprehensive collection development ( $p = .0042$ ), and were more likely to advocate resistance to sequestering lesbigay materials either to bypass strong antigay sentiment in the community ( $p = .0474$ ), or to prevent theft and defacement ( $p = .0121$ ).

Five statements addressed the coverage of lesbigay issues by library media. Only 11.6 percent of graduates agreed or strongly agreed that library media distorted lesbigay issues, while 41 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Only 13 percent unequivocally agreed that library media don't pay enough attention to lesbigay issues, and 17 percent unequivocally agreed that library media pay too much attention to them. Given the data presented, the remaining 70 percent presumably feel that the library media's treatment of lesbigay issues is appropriate. Women were less likely than men to agree with the premise that the library media distort lesbigay issues ( $p = .0195$ ).

### **The MLIS Curriculum**

Six items referred to the coverage of social responsibilities generally and coverage of multiculturalism, women's issues, and lesbigay issues in the curricula of MLIS programs (see table 4). Over half of the respondents (61.3 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that their MLIS education introduced them to the concept of the social responsibility of librarians, and only 21.7 percent dis-

**Table 3**  
Mean Scores and Differences by Sex  
Responses to Social Responsibility Survey

Question	Total Mean Score	Male Mean Score	Male Difference	Female Mean Score	Female Difference
Professionals should remain aloof from social and political activism.	3.72	3.62	-.12	3.75	+.03
The library profession is more socially progressive than most professions.	2.64	2.60	-.04	2.67	+.03
My education in librarianship introduced me to the concepts of librarians' social responsibility.	2.46	2.53	+.07	2.45	-.01
Libraries and librarians have a responsibility to address social issues.	2.29	2.45	+.16	2.25	-.04
Women's issues received some special emphasis in my LIS curriculum.	3.53	3.21	-.32	3.63	+.10*
Materials on controversial topics such as gay and lesbian issues should be sequestered (kept off open shelves) in communities where there is a strong anti-gay sentiment.	4.18	4.03	-.15	4.24	+.06*
The library media distort gay and lesbian issues within the library profession.	3.38	3.21	-.17	3.44	+.06 *
Public libraries should adhere to the philosophy "something to offend (and satisfy) everyone."	2.44	2.57	+.07	2.41	-.03
Gay and lesbian issues should be addressed through collection development in all areas of the library (fiction, nonfiction, reference, etc.).	2.06	2.32	+.26	1.99	-.07*
"Political correctness" is a danger to freedom of speech.	2.47	2.20	-.27	2.57	+.10 *
Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action legislation has had a negative effect on the library and information professions.	3.67	3.44	-.23	3.76	+.09 *
There are just too many special interest groups and minority groups competing for attention in our society.	3.31	3.23	-.08	3.34	+.03
Within the library and information profession the library media don't pay enough attention to gay and lesbian issues.	3.49	3.57	+.08	3.48	-.01

Question	Total	Male		Female	
	Mean Score	Mean Score	Difference	Mean Score	Difference
I would be offended by an <i>American Libraries</i> cover featuring openly gay and lesbian librarians.	3.98	3.93	-.05	4.00	+.02
Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action legislation has had no discernible effect on the library and information profession.	3.42	3.51	+.09	3.39	-.03
Social responsibilities received some special emphasis in my LIS curriculum.	2.68	2.57	-.11	2.72	+.04
The dangers of a philosophy of "political correctness" are greatly exaggerated by the media.	3.18	3.27	+.09	3.16	-.02
I would not be affected one way or another by an issue of <i>American Libraries</i> devoted to problems and concerns of gay librarians and library clients.	2.60	2.52	-.082	2.63	+.03
I disagree with the premise of pro-gay and lesbian literature and would only purchase these titles if requested by members of the community.	3.87	3.72	-.15	3.93	+.05
Library and information professionals have adequately addressed social and political issues.	3.16	3.07	-.09	3.20	+.04
If I were responsible for collection development in a public library I would have acquired children's titles dealing with gay and lesbian issues such as <i>Heather's Mommy</i> and <i>Daddy's Roommate</i> —if they were the best titles of their type available.	1.91	2.08	+.17	1.87	-.04
Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action legislation has had a positive effect on the library and information professions.	2.76	3.01	+.25	2.69	-.07*

(Continued on next page)

Table 3 (Continued)

Question	Total Mean Score	Male Mean Score	Male Difference	Female Mean Score	Female Difference
There is a higher percentage of gays and lesbians in the library and information profession than in the society at large.	3.31	3.11	-.20	3.38	+.07*
Women's issues have received too much attention in library literature.	3.84	3.44	-.40	3.98	+.14*
A philosophy of "political correctness" is essential for the protection of the rights of some minority groups.	3.27	3.46	+.19	3.22	-.05
Social activism is intrinsic to the exercise of First Amendment rights in a democratic society.	2.20	2.15	-.05	2.22	+.02
The library media pay too much attention to gay and lesbian issues in the library profession.	3.40	3.25	-.15	3.45	+.05
Multicultural diversity received some special emphasis in my LIS curriculum.	2.65	2.70	+.05	2.65	.00
I was aware of librarians' social responsibility before entering an LIS program.	2.79	2.89	+.10	2.76	-.03
Library materials on controversial topics such as gay and lesbian issues should be sequestered to prevent theft or defacement.	4.02	3.82	-.20	4.09	+.07*
Women's issues have not been adequately addressed by the library and information professions.	3.16	3.39	+.23	3.09	-.07*

\* Statistically significant difference at probability level  $p < .05$ .

agreed or strongly disagreed. This finding would seem to underscore the need for coverage of these issues in MLIS curricula, although it should be tempered with the knowledge that not all social responsibilities issues receive equal coverage at the present time. For example, 54.9 percent unequivocally agreed that multicultural diversity had received some special emphasis in the curriculum, while only 25.8 percent agreed that women's issues had received similar emphasis. On the other hand, only 9 percent agreed that women's issues were "not discussed at all" in the item that asked respondents to rate coverage of these issues in specific courses. More men than women were likely to respond that women's issues had received some special emphasis in the curriculum ( $p = .0012$ ).

Coverage of lesbian/gay issues in MLIS/MLS curricula is even more sparse than that for women's or multicultural issues, according to the responses received. Only a quarter of all respondents (26 percent) learned about lesbian/gay issues in foundations courses, and a quarter learned about them in reference courses (25 percent). Other courses mentioned were type of library (19.9 percent), diversity (16.6 percent), research methods (8.2 percent), technical services (5.4 percent), collection management (5.2 percent), and ethics/intellectual freedom courses (1.2 percent). Two respondents indicated that there was coverage of these issues only because their professor was gay, and the findings would seem to indicate that some faculty and programs are more consistent in their emphasis on coverage of lesbian/gay issues, since 52.2 percent of respondents either failed to indicate any coverage of lesbian/gay issues, or indicated that it was not discussed at all.

### Qualitative Comments

While a remarkable degree of consensus exists between male and female graduates on social issues generally, and to some degree on women's issues, numerous qualitative comments emphasize the importance of individual experience in shaping respondents' perceptions. One female, for example, commented that she did not recall the national association journal (*American Libraries*) "focusing on women's issues much at all," while another pointed to the lack of substantive studies and curricular emphasis: "I really have *no idea* what effect Equal Opportunity/Equal Opportunity Act has had on the library profession." One woman called for a hiatus on discussion of lesbian/gay issues in favor of women's issues: "Let's work on breaking the glass ceiling." Her sentiments were echoed by another, who called for more respect for work with children. Other female respondents pointed to other areas that were discounted in library literature—work with the homeless, victims of child abuse, and environmental concerns. Although there were no clear delineations by sex on expressed support for social activism versus professional neutrality, it is clear that some members of both sexes felt that the profession should be more proactive in dealing with social problems.

### Conclusions

The 1993 graduates are typically committed to the social responsibilities mandate: they believe that the profession should not remain aloof from social issues and that the library has the responsibility to address social issues

**Table 4**

Male vs. Female 1993 LIS Graduates' Perceptions of Course Content  
Related to Social Responsibilities Issues and Gay and Lesbian Issues  
*N* = 464 (%)

<b>Social Issues Covered</b>			<b>Gay/Lesbian Issues Covered</b>		
<b>Course</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Course</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
<b>Foundations</b>			<b>Foundations</b>		
Agree	220 (62.0)	70 (64.2)	Agree	91 (25.6)	39 (35.8)
Disagree/NR	135 (38.0)	39 (35.6)	Disagree/NR	264 (74.4)	70 (64.2)
<b>Research methods</b>			<b>Research methods</b>		
Agree	86 (24.2)	31 (28.4)	Agree	23 (6.5)	15 (13.8)
Disagree/NR	269 (75.8)	78 (71.6)	Disagree/NR	332 (93.5)	94 (86.2)
<b>Reference</b>			<b>Reference</b>		
Agree	195 (54.9)	64 (58.7)	Agree	80 (22.5)	39 (35.8)
Disagree/NR	160 (45.1)	45 (41.3)	Disagree/NR	275 (77.5)	70 (64.2)
<b>Technical services</b>			<b>Technical services</b>		
Agree	44 (12.4)	21 (19.3)	Agree	16 (4.5)	9 (8.3)
Disagree/NR	311 (87.6)	88 (80.7)	Disagree/NR	339 (95.5)	100 (91.7)
<b>Library type</b>			<b>Library type</b>		
Agree	131 (36.9)	43 (39.4)	Agree	63 (17.7)	26 (23.9)
Disagree/NR	224 (63.1)	66 (60.6)	Disagree/NR	292 (82.2)	83 (76.1)
<b>Diversity course</b>			<b>Diversity course</b>		
Agree	89 (25.1)	35 (32.1)	Agree	47 (13.2)	17 (15.6)
Disagree/NR	266 (74.9)	74 (67.9)	Disagree/NR	308 (86.6)	92 (84.4)
<b>Other course</b>			<b>Other course</b>		
Agree	94 (26.5)	36 (33.0)	Agree	55 (15.5)	22 (20.2)
Disagree/NR	261 (73.5)	73 (67.0)	Disagree/NR	300 (84.5)	87 (79.8)
<b>Collection mgt.</b>			<b>Collection mgt.</b>		
Agree	36 (10.1)	11 (10.1)	Agree	20 (5.6)	4 (3.7)
Disagree/NR	319 (89.9)	98 (89.9)	Disagree/NR	335 (94.4)	105 (96.3)
<b>Bibliography/Mat.</b>			<b>Bibliography/Mat.</b>		
Agree	12 (3.4)	3 (2.8)	Agree	18 (5.1)	5 (4.6)
Disagree/NR	343 (96.6)	106 (97.2)	Disagree/NR	337 (94.9)	104 (95.4)
<b>Admin./Mgt.</b>			<b>Admin./Mgt.</b>		
Agree	16 (4.5)	4 (3.7)	Agree	9 (2.5)	1 (0.9)
Disagree/NR	339 (95.5)	105 (96.3)	Disagree/NR	346 (97.5)	108 (99.1)
<b>I/F or Ethics</b>			<b>I/F or Ethics</b>		
Agree	10 (2.8)	2 (1.8)	Agree	6 (1.7)	—
Disagree/NR	345 (97.2)	107 (98.2)	Disagree/NR	349 (98.3)	109 (100.0)
<b>Not discussed at all</b>			<b>Not discussed at all</b>		
Agree	34 (9.6)	8 (7.3)	Agree	181 (51.0)	41 (37.6)
Disagree/NR	321 (90.4)	101 (92.7)	Disagree/NR	174 (49.0)	68 (62.4)

in collection policy and practices and in service rendered to clientele. Moreover, they are generally supportive of minority concerns within the profession, with women showing an even more heightened social awareness than men of the positive aspects of activism. Beyond general support for minority concerns, however, the majority of 1993 graduates seem ambiguous about the forms of redress and activism that are appropriate to a professional setting.

Perhaps the most interesting finding of the survey was that social orientation, rather than sex or sexual orientation, accounts for the greatest number of statistically significant differences in responses received (twenty-two items). Sex and sexual orientation produce such differences on only eleven items each, half the number generated by self-selected and emotionally "loaded" labels of radical liberal, liberal, moderate, conservative, and radical conservative. Thus, the responses generated by the present survey would seem to suggest that 1993 graduates are more influenced by their sociopolitical orientation to social issues than their own minority status. In the case of the female respondents to this survey, feminist consciousness of workplace inequities is only slightly higher than that of their male colleagues. Women's issues rank fifth among the six categories of issues in the number of statistically significant differences in responses received. Whether this finding indicates that feminist consciousness has evolved to a more inclusive state, whether it is underdeveloped in library and information studies programs, or whether other social problems simply seem more pressing in the current climate, cannot be determined from the present survey, but should be investigated in future studies.

Gender issues and multicultural di-

versity have not received consistent attention in MLIS curricula, although the coverage of such issues in the mainstream media has been intense, especially in the past several years. While many studies have addressed workplace equity, there is little evidence that males and females receive adequate information about how gender roles operate in society, and how they affect librarianship—one of the most prominent "feminized" fields—throughout their course work. The suggestion received from one graduate, for a study of the impact of EO/AA programs in the library field, certainly presents one way to approach the problem in future studies.

Quantitative data and voluminous open-ended comments received suggested that graduates of library education programs perceive themselves to be progressive, albeit somewhat less progressive than the stereotypical left-wing liberal occasionally evoked in the professional press. Many of them recall that their library education programs did not even include women's issues or lesbian issues in their curricula, and some have encountered problems relating to these concerns in their workplace environments. Some socially nonreactionary female graduates are eager to learn more about these and related issues, not only because it will benefit them personally, but also because the majority of library clients are female. Clearly, some consensus exists among 1993 graduates that they would have liked to learn more about these issues in their library education. From the results of this survey, then, it would seem that ALISE might take the initiative in supporting general discussion of curricular and ideological emphasis outside the special interest group sessions at their annual meetings. Programs which do discuss these issues ought to incorporate them into general course content (e.g., sexual harassment and discrimina-

tion in administration/management-type courses) rather than make them solely the focus of occasional workshops. The data would also seem to justify more exhaustive cross-disciplinary studies in the feminized professions of the ideological identity of the current generation of professional novices, a thorough examination of these curricula, and determination of the administrative status of women's professions on campuses which support their programs.

Most importantly, however, the results of this study indicate that while there are some differences by sex in the perceived emphasis placed upon women's issues in MLIS curricula, and the perceived effects of EO/AA legislation on the work environment, consensus exists between male and female 1993 MLIS graduates on nearly two-thirds (twenty out of thirty-one) of these social issues items. Thus, continuing inequities in the field may not be so much related to the content of MLIS curricula or professional ideology as they are to the larger workplace structures—host governments, universities, or school systems—where the moderately “liberal” service orientation of librarianship is subsumed by local political, social, and bureaucratic realities.

### References and Notes

1. Diane Johnson, “Something for the Boys,” *New York Review of Books* 39 (Jan. 16, 1992): 13–18, critiques the men's movement, but not without a swipe at the feminized professions, which are, according to her, “more despised than ever” (p. 16).
2. James V. Carmichael, Jr., and Marilyn L. Shontz, “‘The Last Socially Acceptable Prejudice’: Gay and Lesbian Issues, Social Responsibilities and Coverage of These Issues in MLIS/MLS Programs,” *Library Quarterly* 61 (Jan. 1996), covers sexual orientation.
3. James V. Carmichael, Jr., “The Male Librarian and the Feminine Image: A Survey of Stereotype, Status, and Gender Perceptions,” *Library and Information Science Research* 14 (Oct.–Dec. 1992): 411–46, reviews the pertinent literature on gender (esp. 414–18), and discusses job stratification in the work place (esp. 425–27).
4. Gerald A. Malitz, *A Classification of Instructional Programs* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1987) pp. 15–28.
5. See, for example, the “Reader's Forum” column, *American Libraries* 23 (Sept. 1992): 625; (Oct. 1992): 738–40; (Nov. 1992): 840–44; 24 (Jul./Aug. 1993): 608; 25 (Jan. 1994): 21. The liberal side of the argument was summarized by Dorothy M. Broderick, “Moral Conflict and the Survival of the Public Library,” *American Libraries* 24 (May 1993): 447–48.



## Appendix

### Social Responsibilities Survey

For each of the following statements below, circle one of the numbers in the right-hand column using this key:

- 1 = strongly agree with statement      4 = disagree with statement**  
**2 = agree with statement                5 = strongly disagree with statement**  
**3 = both agree and disagree**

Professionals should remain aloof from social and political activism.	1	2	3	4	5
The library profession is more socially progressive than most professions.	1	2	3	4	5
My education in librarianship introduced me to the concepts of librarians' social responsibility.	1	2	3	4	5
Libraries and librarians have a responsibility to address social issues.	1	2	3	4	5
Women's issues received some special emphasis in my LIS curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5
Materials on controversial topics such as gay and lesbian issues should be sequestered (kept off open shelves) in communities where there is a strong anti-gay sentiment.	1	2	3	4	5
The library media distort gay and lesbian issues within the library profession.	1	2	3	4	5
I learned most about social responsibilities of librarians through the following courses:					
Foundations	1	2	3	4	5
Technical Services	1	2	3	4	5
Research Methods	1	2	3	4	5
Type of library course	1	2	3	4	5
Reference	1	2	3	4	5
Special course on diversity	1	2	3	4	5
Other _____	1	2	3	4	5
Public libraries should adhere to the philosophy "something to offend (and satisfy) everyone."	1	2	3	4	5
Gay and lesbian issues should be addressed through collection development in all areas of the library (fiction, nonfiction, reference, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
"Political correctness" is a danger to freedom of speech.	1	2	3	4	5
Children's information needs are as important as a scholar's information needs.	1	2	3	4	5
Affirmative Action/ Equal Opportunity legislation has had a negative effect on the library and information professions.	1	2	3	4	5
There are just too many special interest groups and minority groups competing for attention in our society.	1	2	3	4	5
The library media don't pay enough attention to gay and lesbian issues within the library and information professions.	1	2	3	4	5
Librarians have a responsibility to transmit particular cultural traditions to minority/ethnic young people.	1	2	3	4	5
I would be offended by an <i>American Libraries</i> cover featuring openly gay and lesbian librarians.	1	2	3	4	5
Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity legislation has had no discernible effect on the library and information profession.	1	2	3	4	5
Social responsibilities received some special emphasis in my LIS curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5

- The dangers of a philosophy of "political correctness" are greatly exaggerated by the media. 1 2 3 4 5
- I would not be affected one way or another by an issue of *American Libraries* devoted to problems and concerns of gay librarians and library clients. 1 2 3 4 5
- Rush Limbaugh has some good points to make about the "FemiNazis." 1 2 3 4 5
- Library and information professionals have adequately addressed social and political issues. 1 2 3 4 5
- If I were responsible for collection development in a public library, I would have acquired children's titles dealing with gay and lesbian issues such as *Heather's Mommy and Daddy's Roommate* — if they were the best titles of their type available. 1 2 3 4 5
- Affirmative Action/ Equal Opportunity legislation has had a positive effect on the library and information professions. 1 2 3 4 5
- There is a higher percentage of gays and lesbians in the library and information professions than in the society at large. 1 2 3 4 5
- I was aware of librarians' social responsibility before entering an LIS program. 1 2 3 4 5
- A philosophy of "political correctness" is essential for the protection of the rights of some minority groups. 1 2 3 4 5
- Social and political activism is intrinsic to the exercise of First Amendment rights in a democratic society. 1 2 3 4 5
- The library media pay too much attention to gay and lesbian issues in the library profession. 1 2 3 4 5
- Multicultural diversity received some special emphasis in my LIS curriculum. 1 2 3 4 5
- Women's issues have received too much attention in library literature. 1 2 3 4 5
- Gay and lesbian library issues received some emphasis in the following courses:
- |                              |                                       |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Foundations 1 2 3 4 5        | Type of library course 1 2 3 4 5      |
| Research Methods 1 2 3 4 5   | Special course on diversity 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Reference 1 2 3 4 5          | Other _____ 1 2 3 4 5                 |
| Technical Services 1 2 3 4 5 | Not discussed at all 1 2 3 4 5        |
- Library materials on controversial topics such as gay and lesbian issues should be sequestered to prevent theft or defacement. 1 2 3 4 5
- Special interest agendas such as that represented by the first Black Caucus Conference of ALA in 1993, represent a threat to professional unity. 1 2 3 4 5
- Women's issues have not been adequately addressed by the library and information professions. 1 2 3 4 5

#### PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DATA

For each of the following questions check any categories which apply at the present time:

- Sex:** ☐ Female ☐ Male
- Age:** ☐ 21-29 ☐ 30-35 ☐ 36-39 ☐ 40-45  
☐ 46-49 ☐ 50-55 ☐ 56-59 ☐ 60 or older

**State of birth (if foreign, country):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Ethnicity:**

- ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native      ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander  
☐ Black, Non-Hispanic      ☐ Hispanic  
☐ White, Non-Hispanic      ☐ Other:

**Marital Status:** (Check one)

- ☐ Single      ☐ Married  
☐ Spouse or partner deceased      ☐ Divorced  
☐ Living with partner

**Sexual orientation:** (Check one)

- ☐ Straight      ☐ Gay or Lesbian  
☐ Bisexual or other

**Social Orientation:** I describe myself as socially: (Check one)

- ☐ radically progressive      ☐ liberal      ☐ moderate  
☐ conservative      ☐ radically conservative

**Undergraduate Major:** \_\_\_\_\_**Education other than LIS:** (Please check any areas which apply)

- ☐ Master's Degree in another subject area (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Doctorate in other subject field      ☐ Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**Previous library experience:** Number of years as a professional \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years as a paraprofessional \_\_\_\_\_

**Length of LIS education:** What year/semester did you begin your LIS degree work? \_\_\_\_\_**Library Type:** (present work)

- ☐ Academic      ☐ Public      ☐ Special  
☐ School Library Media      ☐ Non-LIS Position  
☐ No job at present      ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Position Function** Select one which best describes your current responsibilities:

- ☐ Administration      ☐ Adult Services      ☐ Acquisitions  
☐ Collection Development      ☐ Other Public Services      ☐ Reference  
☐ Youth Services      ☐ School Library Media      ☐ Cataloging  
☐ Other Technical Services      ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_      ☐ N/A

**Number of years in present position:** \_\_\_\_\_

In what type of library did you originally want to work? \_\_\_\_\_

If applicable, why did you change type of library? \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your assistance. Please use the back of these pages for any additional comments you may have about this survey or social responsibilities.